



## The Storm

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Written only six months after the publication of *The Awakening*, “The Storm” continues Chopin's confrontation with the theme of women's sexuality and the complexities of the married state. In this five-part short story, the narrative structure allows Chopin to present varying perspectives on a single situation as a means of suggesting that “reality” is, at best, relative. The situation is simple enough: Calixta's husband, Bobinôt, and son, Bibi, are in town when a storm hits. Alone at home, Calixta is about to shut the windows and doors against the rain when her former lover, Alcée Laballière, rides into the yard seeking shelter. While the storm rages, Calixta and Alcée renew their passionate feelings for each other; their desire finally leads them into having sex. When the storm abates, Alcée departs, and Calixta welcomes her family back home. The story concludes, “So the storm passed and every one was happy.”

Like all of Chopin's best fiction, “The Storm” does not offer pat moral truisms; indeed, the shocking element of this story's conclusion is that the retribution one might expect for the act of adultery never comes. In section 2, the crucial love scene is played out against ironic allusions to Christian symbolism: the Assumption, an immaculate dove, a lily, and the passion. Chopin offers a moral tale in which a woman's sexual experience is not condemned but celebrated and in which she uses that experience not to abandon her family but to accept them with a renewed sense of commitment. Unlike *The Awakening*, “The Storm” allows a woman to gain personal fulfillment and to remain happily married. As in most naturalistic fiction, morality—like reality—is relative.

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